DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 053 SO 030 082

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TITLE The AFS Volunteer Resources Study: Summary of Findings from Germany Study.
INSTITUTION AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc., New York, NY. Center for the Study of Intercultural Learning.
PUB DATE Dec 89
NOTE 21p.; For related documents, see SO 030 078-084.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; Evaluation; Foreign Countries; Global Approach; Higher Education; *International Programs; Interpersonal Relationship; Secondary Education; Self Motivation; *Student Volunteers; *Voluntary Agencies; *Volunteers; Womens Studies
IDENTIFIERS *West Germany

ABSTRACT

An ongoing debate exists on the issue of volunteering and its political implications in West Germany. Critics of the social welfare system have a direct impact on volunteerism. The ruling coalition aims to limit public spending in the social services sector while the "grassroots" movement emphasizes the danger of state-provided services and claims that decentralized services are more effective than the public welfare system. More women than men volunteer. This is seen as an attempt to devalue the work women do and displace them from the job market, since the typical volunteer often has a history of serving in unpaid positions. Among the motivating factors for volunteer work are a sense of gratitude and obligation, contributing to improvement, desire for social contact, and gaining influence and power, among the rewards are recognition and personal growth. Factors in discontinuance of volunteer work are: (1) hurt feelings and personal conflict, (2) planned succession, (3) burn out, (4) change of priorities, and (5) lack of friends within the organizations. Among the eight recommendations for future volunteer recruitment and retention are: making volunteers feel a part of the organization; organization staff needs to become personally acquainted with volunteers; and volunteers should have the opportunity for new learning and experiences. (NL)

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Summary of Findings from Germany

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by Uli Zeutschel, Project Consultant
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THE AFS VOLUNTEER RESOURCES STUDY

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The AFS Volunteer Resources Study
Summary of Findings from Germany

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December 1989

The Context of Voluntary Activity in Germany

"Ehrenamtlich" is the term most often used to refer to volunteers in Germany, but it is hardly a satisfying term for many of those who contribute their time and labor on an unpaid basis. The word, which means "honorary position," carries connotations of duty and formal positions or offices and may conjure images, especially for young people, of self-importance, "Politicking," and fussy formality. Many volunteers prefer to describe their work (e.g. "I am responsible for contacts to the local press") than to identify themselves as "Ehrenamtliche."

The different forms of volunteering currently observable in Germany can be described by three basic models of volunteering, two of which are long-standing traditions while the third model is of fairly recent origin.

The tradition most closely connected with the term "Ehrenamt" has its roots in the bourgeois society of the 19th century, when it became an obligation as well as a status-enhancing privilege of the affluent class to devote some of their resources and leisure time to charitable purposes. At the same time, the middle class developed and ran a rapidly growing number of "Vereine," clubs and associations with formal positions and procedures that were devoted to such things as the fine arts, local politics, and socializing. Social status was accorded to office holders in these groups, which were effectively restricted to men of high social standing as determined by educational level, professional position, and income.

The second tradition of volunteering is closely linked to the Social Democratic and Communist workers' movement which addressed material, social, and cultural needs of the working class through collective self-help in areas such as health care, housing, savings cooperatives, educational programs, and sports clubs. Many such organizations were founded between 1900 and 1930. Though these groups also emphasized formal procedures, they differed from the organizations of the first model in that there was widespread involvement of both sexes and all age groups. Volunteers in this second model are characterized by duty-orientation, strong personal identification, and long-standing involvement in "their" organization.

A third model of volunteering found in Germany today consists of a newly emerging social, political, environmental action, and self-help movement. This combines ideas stemming from the self-help groups of the early 1960s, the direct political involvement outside of the party system by leftist students of the late 1960s, a growing concern with the environment, and the peace movement of the 1980s. This model also encompasses a host of local initiatives formed to address immediate social, cultural, and economic needs.

Political Context

It does not take much research to discover the ongoing controversial debate on the issue of volunteering and its political implications in Germany. A critical cultural assumption is the concept of "Sozialstaat," meaning that German citizens have a legal right to expect the state to provide basic sustenance through the public welfare system should they be unable to provide for themselves. In the 1970s the government favored strong expansion and professionalism of public services. More recently, the pressures on the social welfare system and a change in priorities brought by the present government have marked a severe crisis of the "Sozialstaat."

Two lines of criticism against the social welfare system have direct implications for volunteerism. (1) The ruling coalition aims at limiting public spending in the social services sector and argues in favor of private and volunteer services. (2) Proponents of the autonomy-oriented grassroots movement emphasize the limits and dangers of state-provided professional services and favor using lay help in decentralized services which often prove more effective and personal than the anonymous, bureaucratic, professional public welfare system. Proponents of volunteering thus come from opposite ends of the political spectrum in Germany, and support volunteering for very different reasons.

There are also two lines of argument that raise concerns about volunteering. First is the idea that the services provided by self-help initiatives often serve only the middle class individuals who have the resources to set up such things as high quality cooperative kindergartens for their own children (and obtain state subsidies to do so), leaving the decrepit public social service sector for the less fortunate. A second concern relates to the fact that it is generally women who volunteer in the social service area. Having these positions as unpaid volunteer work rather than professional employment is seen to represent another attempt to devalue the work that women do and to displace them from the job market.

What Makes a Person Ready to Volunteer?

Those most ready to volunteer typically have a history of volunteering or serving in some unpaid position in their youth. This becomes very clear from the biographies of older volunteers in welfare organizations who started out as members in youth chapters of these organizations. For them, volunteering has become a way of life, something that is "self-understood," as a number of interviewees put it. Others learn to volunteer through early experiences in student government, sports clubs, church youth groups, and labor unions, though these activities are most often not thought of as "ehrenamtlich." Among AFS volunteers, returnees are often prompted to volunteer during the first two years following their exchange program, using their involvement with AFS as a way of "working through" their experience.

Parents are often ready to volunteer in efforts that benefit their own children. A distinct pattern of moving from one volunteer position to the next is to be found in parents -- mostly mothers -- who accompany their children through different educational institutions from kindergarten through secondary school, including such things as religious education in the church parish and, of course, AFS. They become involved as classroom aides, as chaperones on excursions, or as helpers at special events, are found on parents' advisory boards and may be active volunteers or chairpersons in AFS committees.

An acquaintance with the "dark sides of life" was also mentioned several times as a factor in the decision to volunteer. Many who have gone through an intense personal coping process, either with their own difficulties or in dealing with the afflictions of a family member, have emerged with the strength and capacity to become spokespersons or counselors for others facing similar crises.

Having time available is a major factor in an individual's readiness to volunteer. Students with flexible scheduling, retirees, homemakers whose children are in school, those who are self-employed or have flexibility in their working hours, public employees who are able to get time off, and those who can use some of their working time and resources (e.g., telephone, photocopier, etc.) for volunteer activities are all likely candidates for volunteering.

Volunteering to hold an office involves specific personal traits that predispose a person to offer themselves in this capacity or to be selected by others to hold office. Being outspoken in front of a large audience, taking a stand in a controversial debate, or being able to propose a plan of action in an organizational crisis all may lead an individual to become an office holder in an organization. Since it has been observed by a number of female volunteers that males tend to dominate group discussions and to take charge even when they are outnumbered by female participants, these factors

may have contributed to the greater preponderance of male office holders even in largely female volunteer organizations.

Other criteria predisposing individuals to be asked to volunteer for official positions are a high level of education, familiarity with parliamentary procedure and organizational structures, material resources, and personal and professional connections.

Triggers to Volunteer Involvement

Even individuals who could be considered predisposed to volunteer will not actually get involved with an organization until something triggers their involvement. This trigger is often a socializing impulse. In nearly all AFS committees there is a welcome/farewell party in the summer for newly returned students as well as for those about to depart. For returnees, this is the first contact point after their program year, not only with the local committee, but more importantly with their fellow returnees with whom they had formed close relations prior to going abroad through the predeparture orientation sessions. This kind of socializing impulse was described by a number of volunteers from other associations as well. Volunteers recall their first involvement as "going along to a meeting with a friend" or "knowing some people" in the organization.

Having joined an association and attended one or more meetings, however, the volunteer still needs a second "trigger" to take over specific tasks, functions, or offices. In AFS, recent returnees are most strongly attracted to having an input in the selection of new "hope-ees" (AFS Germany's term for AFS candidates) which is usually their first assignment as an active AFS volunteer. Another impulse for active involvement reported by several young volunteers in self-help associations and initiative groups involves competition for influence within the group. A typical scenario is when certain members of a group become disenchanted with the current leadership and gather their forces among those with similar concerns, bringing them along to the meeting to provide moral support and a voting majority.

Similarly, an organizational crisis can sometimes trigger more active involvement among the members of the group. Typically, such crises are caused by the sudden resignation of a previous chairperson with no plan for succession of leadership. Others may be introduced to more active involvement by being called on to step in temporarily for a more experienced volunteer. Substituting for another volunteer may be the stepping stone to more active volunteering because it lowers the pressure to perform perfectly, does not imply permanent commitment, and provides a sense of confidence by having managed the task.

Volunteers also become involved for two very simple reasons: (1) the volunteer was asked to take on a particular task, and (2) the volunteer has the information about an organization's needs and opportunities for volunteering. Among AFS volunteers, many remarked that they initially had no idea whatsoever about the purpose of the local committees, but became motivated to volunteer once they became informed about specific opportunities for involvement.

Motivations for Active Involvement

Sense of Gratitude. AFS returnees frequently reported being motivated by a sense of gratitude to the organization for the positive exchange experience in general, for activities with local AFS chapters in the host country or special program activities, or for specific assistance and support received in problem situations. Vicarious feelings of gratitude were also mentioned by the mothers of program participants. Similarly, gratitude was a motivation for members of self-help associations and in a housing cooperative, while volunteers in a church parish reported more generalized feelings of gratitude for being blessed with a good life.

Sense of Obligation. Feeling obligated to AFS, to its principal values, or to the general ideals of international understanding was often given as a motive by AFS returnees. Volunteers outside of AFS reported feelings of obligation toward others less fortunate than themselves, to a particular cause, and to society. Some interviewees expressed their sense of obligation as a general attitude of "If I didn't do it, who else would?" which drove them to step forward to take on particular tasks or functions. Being asked to volunteer as a personal favor to a friend generated some of the strongest feelings of obligation.

Contributing Towards Improvement. Some AFS returnees felt challenged by negative aspects of the program, such as inadequate orientation or support, and felt compelled to become actively involved upon their return to insure that others would not face the same difficulties. Several volunteers from other organizations also indicated that their feelings of dissatisfaction or even pity for a poorly run but well-meaning association combined with their own feelings of competence drew them to try to remedy the perceived problems.

Direct Personal or Familial Concern. As has been described previously, mothers of AFS program participants often get involved in local AFS committees for the same reasons they volunteered for the schools their children attended. This motivation is similar to that of relatives of disabled children who join self-help associations. Other instances of personal concern include social and political action groups addressing

problems that directly affect the membership, such as an increase in public transportation fares.

Desire for Social Contact. Volunteering can provide opportunities to meet like-minded people. AFS returnees in particular feel a need to meet others who have had a similar experience. A desire for social contact may stem from a lack of opportunity to meet people informally or to get to know people on a personal level in the mainstream adult society in Germany. Shared interests and practical cooperation on volunteer tasks are often ways to become acquainted and get to know others privately (as evidenced in addressing other volunteers by "Du" rather than the formal "Sie"). Adults who volunteer to work with young people frequently mention a desire to "keep in touch" with the younger generation or to "find out what young people think." Finally, people who are new to an area may get involved in volunteer activities in order to meet people in the new environment.

Personal Identification. Volunteers may be attracted to the style or atmosphere of a volunteer organization and identify with its membership. Potential volunteers seem consciously to select organizations that fit their personal ideological position and therefore take great pride in belonging. Even when individual members may be critical of certain aspects of the organization's policy or operations, they continue to be involved because of their overall personal identification with the organization.

"Working Through" One's Experience. For both the exchange program returnee and the individual who has had to cope with a difficult personal experience, volunteering can be a means of "working through" that experience. The German word, "Leidensdruck" describes the grieving pressure that may push a person toward volunteering as a coping strategy. AFS returnees often reported that the contact they had with other returnees while volunteering for AFS had helped to lessen the stress of readjustment to home by providing them with a subcultural niche in which they could be themselves and find empathic listeners.

Sharing Experiences and Insights. The desire to inform, to teach, and to give advice was mentioned by a large number of interviewees both within and outside of AFS. The need to pass on insights and knowledge often leads to an almost proprietary pride in the learning progress and development of one's charges. Typical examples include leading AFS orientation programs, coaching youngsters in sports, and informing the public about environmental issues.

Being Attracted By the Task at Hand. Having a task that fits one's abilities and interests is highly motivating to most volunteers. New volunteers are attracted to tasks that are clearly defined and in which they feel likely to succeed. Those with more experience or those more willing to take risks may be drawn to challenging tasks that

give them room for personal initiative and creativity. Being able to contribute one's special abilities and talents is another task-specific motivation, as it raises the volunteer's self-confidence and is often the source of special recognition within the group.

New Learning and Experience. The desire for new learning and experience was a frequently mentioned motivation, especially among those who wanted to expand their less-than-satisfying job life, or among homemakers who wanted to apply their previous professional training. Volunteer activities that require technical skills and systematic training (e.g., paramedic services, fire fighting) are attractive because of their tangible training opportunities.

Cooperating With Other Volunteers. Team spirit and a sense of mutual reliance on others was frequently mentioned by AFS interviewees in connection with group activities. As could be expected, the value placed on cooperation was especially strong in volunteers whose work by nature required swift and competent team action: Volunteer paramedics as well as a chief fire fighter interviewed mentioned how much they enjoyed being part of a well functioning team that was bound together by a great feeling of comradeship extending well beyond the field of duty missions.

Making a Difference. The desire to make a difference is a very basic motive for getting involved, be it as service-oriented volunteers in a welfare organization, as concerned parents in a parents' council at the school, or as political activists in an environmental action group.

Gaining Personal Influence and Power. This motivation was identifiable in nearly every organization, either as an implicit or explicit driving force of the particular interviewee or in the form of complaints about fellow volunteers or board members. The relative ease with which leadership positions are attainable in smaller volunteer organizations seems to attract individuals who enjoy being in charge but do not have sufficient opportunity for it on their jobs or in homemaking. This motivation has typically negative connotations for many, but one volunteer in a paramedic squad summarized his view by saying, "Power-hungry people are the best volunteers since they try to get ahead."

Rewards

Friendships and Social Rewards. One of the frequently mentioned rewards of volunteering was a feeling of belonging or sense of togetherness that the group inspired. Forming international friendships and being part of a global community was a specific case of this feeling mentioned not only by AFS volunteers but by other volunteers who

had attended international conferences or otherwise shared their volunteer background with individuals from other countries. Within the local group, volunteers from all sorts of organizations commented on the "fascinating" people they had met through volunteer work.

New Knowledge and Insights. Acquiring new technical and personal skills through training and experience was seen as a reward by numerous interviewees. This included skills related to organizing groups, writing letters, making press contacts, or teaching as well as to such things as gaining new information about a previously unknown subject area or developing the expertise that comes with confronting the problems of disadvantaged minorities or getting the "inside picture" of community politics.

Sense of Achievement. The successful completion of a challenging task was seen as an intrinsic reward of volunteering. Several AFS volunteers specifically described their feelings of elation after conducting a particularly strenuous orientation seminar, or after completing a mission as an airport aide -- feelings shared by volunteer fire fighters and paramedics and the conclusion of large-scale rescue missions. The visibility of the results is an essential element and may account for frequent mentions of manual work and people-oriented activities as strongly rewarding. Several mentioned the rewards of seeing progress in their "clients."

Personal Growth. On a more general level, volunteering provided a number of interviewees with an encompassing sense of self-development, manifested in greater self-confidence, opening up to others, asserting themselves vis à vis professionally successful husbands, and a sense of proving themselves as active and competent individuals. Revealing quotes from the volunteers include such remarks as: "Ten years ago I would have never had the guts to get up and argue against another person's view before a large audience."

Special Events. Parties, excursions, and advanced training seminars paid for by the organization can act as powerful rewards and incentives. Attractive tasks such as being a flight leader for outbound exchange students, or representing the organization at a sumptuous dinner reception are often assigned on a merit system.

Recognition

Recognition is a reward of volunteering and a strong motivating factor in "keeping one going" in volunteer activities. Several different types of recognition were identified in the course of this research. They include:

Positive Response from "Clients". As most volunteer efforts are directed at helping, counseling, or otherwise supporting other individuals, their acknowledgement is a powerful feedback about the merit and value of one's efforts. This may consist of displays of gratitude, or, as is typical in the AFS examples, stories about insights gained by exchange students and host families as a result of advice given to them by the volunteer.

Acceptance by Other Volunteers. Especially for young or inexperienced volunteers, acceptance and recognition from other group members is an essential determinant of further involvement. Interviewees described how important it had been for them as novices to be accepted as full members in their group or team, to be entrusted with some degree of responsibility in their task, and to be heard when decisions were being made. Having an input in decisions taken by the organization was also a way in which volunteers felt recognized by the group.

Recognition by Professionals. Volunteers who are working along side of professional colleagues appreciate direct recognition for their work from these colleagues as well as indirect recognition such as being given the same high quality technical equipment as the professionals.

"Official" Recognition. "Official praise from higher up" in the form of special privileges, awards, medals, laudatory speeches, and newsletter articles may be more effective in traditional organizations and communities where volunteer positions are still regarded as "Ehrenamt." Interviewees included in this sample, however, tended to view these kinds of recognition with suspicion, or considered them somewhat embarrassing. Specific positive feedback or small personal gestures of recognition seem to be more effective than official honors and praise.

Leaving the Volunteer Organization

Staff members at the AFS national office described three patterns of discontinuing involvement of local committee chairpersons:

- Planned succession, including systematic orientation of the successor,
- Overdue succession of chairpersons who have searched unsuccessfully for potential successors, and merely continue to "hang in there" with growing feelings of frustration,
- Abrupt quitting, often triggered by hurt feelings or personal conflicts.

Besides "objective" reasons for discontinuing involvement as a volunteer, such as moving away, physical restrictions due to illness or old age, some of the other causes of "dropping out" mentioned by interviewees are described below.

Personal Conflicts. Most often, such personal conflicts seemed to involve officers, board representatives, or staff members -- all those who have a relationship involving directive power over the volunteer.

Change of Priorities. New personal goals such as starting a family, taking Abitur or final university exams, or beginning a new career, often take priority over volunteering. In some cases the volunteering was a strategy to obtain a paid position, at which point the individual quits volunteering. Another common example occurs in the case of the mothers who are involved in volunteer activities focused on their own children. As these children leave home, the volunteer takes on new personal interests and may leave the organization.

Burn Out. Two distinct patterns of volunteer "burn out" have emerged from interviews with former volunteers and their successors in leadership positions. In the first, volunteers in leadership positions who have high standards and strong commitment sometimes reluctant to delegate tasks to others. The other volunteers in the group feel excluded from responsible tasks and input and begin to withdraw, thus actually increasing the work load of the volunteer leader as well as isolating him or her socially. The ensuing feelings of "being left alone with all the work" and of not getting response and recognition from others in the group often leads to the sudden and total disengagement of the volunteer leader.

Another pattern of burn out seems to be connected with repetitive, routine tasks which do not provide the volunteer with on-going satisfactions or rewards. Among AFS volunteers, this pattern was sometimes found with those who had lead a series of predeparture orientations. Dealing with ever new participants who have the same questions gives some volunteers a sense of stagnation, and may lead to a "telephone operator syndrome," in which the person becomes increasingly aggressive in having to answer the same question, which is just as pertinent to the 50th caller as it was to the first.

Lack of Friends in the Organization. If a volunteer's central motivation is social, he or she will leave an organization when close friends leave, when he or she feels left out, or when there are no other group members in the same age bracket.

New Focus for the Organization. Leadership and policy changes may lead to the feeling that "this is not my kind of organization any more," or that certain central values and ideals for which the organization stood have been betrayed. Increased emphasis

on professional standards of work as well as "style" of presentation may also transmit the message that volunteer efforts are not valued any more.

Analyzing Volunteer Involvement

Politicians, Activists, and Thinkers. Liking versus disliking organizational structure and "politics" emerged as a central dimension implying significant differences in motivations and forms of volunteer involvement. Strong distrust of and aversion to large, complex organizations was expressed by many young interviewees as well as by older ones who had experienced Nazi regimentation.

Practically all older volunteers who expressed frustration and disillusionment with policy-making and executive boards were females, while those who indicated some enthusiasm for organizational structure, policy, and decision-making were all males. These "organization men" usually had an extensive background of volunteer service in formal positions in student government, political parties, labor unions, or professional associations, were often interested in policy issues beyond their immediate field of activity, and enjoyed "playing the game" of organizational politics. Others (typically women) in higher echelons of associations use the political aspect of their work to change those things that have a direct bearing on their practical volunteer work. They often have a firm commitment to their local group and are appreciated by those they represent for doing the "dirty work" of representing local interests in policy-making circles.

Most volunteers, however, expressed a distinct lack of interest in general policy discussion and formulation, and were more concerned with social relations within the local group and with concrete tasks or activities.

A third group of volunteers consists generally of more experienced volunteers who become interested in policy issues after they have gained a broad understanding of the volunteer work and its context in the wider society. They are more reflective and interested in the content of the policy rather than in the power they can wield.

Initiators Versus Administrators. Volunteers can be identified by the type of work situations they prefer. Some are initiators who are driven by the need to create and to innovate. They are motivated (and rewarded) by organizational renewal and expansion, membership growth, acquisition of new facilities or equipment, and by networking with related organizations. Initiators can show a very strong desire for setting the course of an organization and may often work as individuals with very little delegation of tasks. Another type of initiator is more strongly team-oriented, however, and tends to develop close friendships with the members of the team. Initiators generally

have no liking for formal structures and procedures which keep them from getting things done.

"Administrators" on the other hand are attracted by clearly defined roles and assignments, formalized decision making procedures and communication lines. They prefer continuous, steady involvement and like for operations to run smoothly. They are more likely to serve in well-established social welfare organizations where they will get the training and supervision they want. In AFS there are very few volunteers of this type, a fact that would seem to be correlated with the relatively high turn-over among AFS volunteers and the resulting lack of firmly established organizational structures and role differentiation in the local committees.

Constraints to Volunteering

In recent years, a number of social trends in Germany are seen as constraints to people's willingness to volunteer. Less regard for formal functions and "political work" has meant that German people may be less inclined to volunteer for positions in which there are formal roles and procedures, or in which a great deal of political involvement is required. Young people in Germany today are also faced with new stresses centered on a more difficult and lengthier formal educational system and on a perceived lack of personal stability and long term commitments in an individual's life in modern Germany.

Recruitment difficulties are particularly severe for volunteer positions requiring continuous and nearly full-time involvement. These positions were traditionally taken by housewives who had spare time after their children left the house. As a large percentage of homemakers now need to return to gainful employment, this traditional pool of volunteers has diminished and continues to diminish as employment becomes an increasingly attractive option for all women.

Exchange organizations have begun to suffer in volunteer recruitment as the returnees, who have been a standard source of volunteers, are coming more and more to see their exchange experience as a service for which they paid money and feel less sense of commitment to "their" organization as a result.

Volunteers themselves may report that they "do not feel ready" to volunteer or "do not feel needed or welcome" within the existing group of volunteers. Many different sorts of organizations have boards or local committees that tend to be "cliquey" and do not necessarily see a need to integrate new volunteers in their group, particular since these newcomers may lack their experience and expertise.

Other reasons for not volunteering for AFS included school obligations, competing extracurricular activities at school, and the feeling that AFS programs serve a more elite group and that volunteer effort is better directed to less privileged groups.

Frustrations

Lack of Response from Clients, Participants, and Other Volunteers. Numerous interviewees mentioned this as a central source of frustration, which is hardly surprising as it implies a lack of recognition for their efforts. Volunteers need to place prime emphasis on the intrinsic motivations of their work in order to continue investing their time, energy, and personal resources without any prospect of material gain. Lack of interest and commitment in other volunteers not only jeopardizes the potential for successful cooperation but also undermines a volunteer's own motivations.

Lack of Administrative Support. This refers to the volunteer's own lack of information about structures and procedures of the central administration, such as in cases of unclear or frequently changing staff responsibilities at the headquarters. A number of volunteers held the attitude that paid staff in a volunteer organization are employed primarily to serve the needs of the volunteer work force.

Lack of Identification with Policies and Programs. Having to defend the faults of the organization to its clients is understandably frustrating to volunteers. The same is true in having to justify policies that the volunteer does not fully understand or accept. A specific example concerned AFS volunteers in several local committees who are unwilling to devote time and energy to host family recruitment and program planning for the in-bound Summer Program because of repeated negative experiences with tourist-oriented guest students in recent years.

Feelings of Being Used. Some volunteers reported recurring feelings of being used by their organizations when they received a series of requests and assignments without any sign of appreciation for their efforts, while in other cases the volunteer organization did not offer to reimburse the personal expenses volunteers incurred in doing their work.

Disorganized Administration. Administrative slip-ups that destroy or hinder efforts of volunteers are extremely frustrating, especially such things as last-minute assignments that could have been planned and announced well in advance.

Key Issues

Generation Gaps. The term "generation gap" is used here to describe potential problems and difficulties in communication between different groups of volunteers who can be distinguished on the basis of age or experience within the organization.

First are the communication barriers that are found between adult volunteers of the "parent" generation and youth or adolescent volunteers, where different styles of meetings or other events conflict. Generally, youth prefer a more informal, more "fun" approach with flexible time commitment, while the adult generation is more likely to take the pragmatic view of getting through the business before socializing. In events without a central topic or common activity that can involve everyone, the age group that is in the minority is likely to feel out of place "among all these young (old) folks."

The level of experience within the organization also creates a generation gap between the "old hands" and the "greenhorns." New volunteers tend to see the tasks at hand in a narrower perspective as determined by their personal concerns while volunteers with more experience are more likely to take a broader view. A volunteer with Amnesty International reported that new members need time within the organization to cope with feelings of terror and of the futility of their efforts before becoming truly effective in their contributions. A rather obvious source of conflict between "old hands" and "greenhorns" lies in the degree of organizational knowledge: long standing members often use insider terminology such as abbreviations and technical terms, making it difficult for newcomers to enter into the discussion. New members may also be too shy to keep signaling their status as novices by asking "stupid" questions while experienced volunteers also get frustrated having to reiterate the same basic information to newcomers, especially to those whose further involvement is uncertain.

A third generation gap concerns the "pioneers" of an organization and their successors. Volunteers who had participated in the founding of a "Bügerhaus" (community center), for example, expressed disappointment with new developments in decision making and group atmosphere after the project had completed its pioneer phase and attracted new volunteers. The more formalized decision making and less personal involvement of the new volunteers frustrated the "pioneers" while those who had joined later complained about the excessive personal identification and standards of commitment demanded by the earlier group.

In reviewing these types of generation gaps, an underlying dimension can be found. Recent AFS returnees, new volunteers in self-help organizations, and first-generation volunteers in newly established organizations are all characterized by a high degree of emotional involvement and subjective personal identification, which is readily at

odds with the more rational, formal, and other-oriented goals and expectations of older, more experienced, and second-generation volunteers.

Generational conflicts are minimized in organizations with a primarily topical focus (e.g. German Federation for Bird Protection) or which provide highly skilled services for which extensive training is provided (emergency rescue teams). In addition, generation gaps are lessened when intergenerational teams of volunteers cooperate on tasks in which each volunteer must contribute a special skill or perspective.

Staff-Volunteer Relations. As a consequence of differences in the way local versus national organizations operate, the perspectives of local volunteers and national organization staff frequently do not match. A common complaint of local AFS volunteers is that carefully thought out decisions reached in the committee, such as the selection of a program candidate or a strategy for handling a difficult counseling case, are overridden by the national office according to "formula" criteria. Conversely, there are complaints by national office staff about subjective and idealistic decisions made in the local committees without regard for general program standards. Similar differences were found in other organizations with local chapters represented by regional or national offices. When the volunteers are personally acquainted with staff members, however, for example through visits made by staff to the local committee or through an internship or training program that brought the volunteer to the national office, the difficulties are drastically reduced.

Volunteering and Professionalism. Volunteering gains much of its meaning in its contrast to employment. There are several distinct ways in which volunteer activity relates to the professional or work-related situation of the individual volunteer.

First is the desire to establish a reputation or gain access to a particular professional field. Since there are few opportunities for employment in Germany in the public service sector, even those who have completed their professional training have a rather low chance of finding paid employment. Through volunteering, e.g. by teaching a class that is open to the general public or by offering to lead groups in not-for-profit associations, these individuals have a chance to test out new ideas and concepts and seek out alternative employment opportunities. Once appropriate employment is found, these people will typically leave their volunteer work.

Similarly, some professionally trained individuals will work without pay for an organization in hopes of "earning" paid employment there, often in the form of a two-year, government-subsidized contract earmarked for unemployed individuals who have completed their vocational or professional training. Many organizations begin with a staff of volunteer unemployed professionals who work to make the organization financially self-supporting and able to offer permanent employment for the staff.

Volunteers working in this capacity show enormous personal identification with the organization and a high level of commitment in developing the organization they hope will provide their future livelihood.

Professional skills are also contributed by homemakers who may want to ease back into the area of their previous training, by people whose paid employment does not offer enough stimulation or satisfaction, and by those whose job-related expertise is in some much needed area such as bookkeeping, psychological assessment, or counseling.

Recommendations

1. AFS should emphasize the message that returnees, host and natural families are part of the AFS community.

By not keeping track of the natural AFS "membership," the organization loses many potential volunteers. Older returnees could be re-attracted to AFS though such things as follow-up programs that serve as refreshers of the past exchange experience and foster its transfer into family and professional life, or international seminars and excursions to AFS chapters in other countries. The sense of belonging to the organization is enhanced through such simple things as newsletter "gossip" columns with personal news about returnees in the area or "anniversary" mailings. It is also important for the organization to recognize the skills that older returnees could bring to the organization, for instance, by recruiting this group for host family support allowing them to use their exchange and general life experience.

Host and natural parents also need to hear the message, "You are an integral part of the AFS community. We need your input and participation." By having regular meetings during the exchange year, personal relationships within this group may develop that can lead to continuing involvement long after the exchange year. In this context, it is important to develop roles and identify tasks for these volunteers that take advantage of their individual skills and interests. It may be particularly gratifying for some mothers to have opportunities to become involved in something in their own right rather than as the "mother of . . ." Training and basic information is especially appreciated by parents and encourages their continued participation.

2. AFS national office staff should make a special effort to become personally acquainted with volunteers.

Difficulties between staff and volunteers are quite common in all kinds of volunteer organizations. The geographic distance that often separates the national office staff and the local volunteers can easily lead to misunderstandings. When staff travel to

the local areas to meet with volunteers, or when volunteers are brought into the national office for training and meetings with staff members, these difficulties become much less frequent. Volunteers can better understand the policy concerns and program standards set by the national office, and the staff can come to appreciate the social, political, and practical concerns that volunteers face in their communities. Developing these ties is an important part of recognizing the volunteers and the value of their work and providing that "personal touch" that keeps volunteer motivation strong.

3. AFS should entrust volunteers with important responsibilities and tasks and provide them with the resources necessary to meet these responsibilities.
Volunteers are interested in assuming responsibility for the organization they serve and can, with the right information, training, and resources, perform a wide range of tasks for its benefit. Assuming responsibility for the organization can also imply assuming some responsibility for policy decisions as well. A volunteer who is responsible for selecting the AFS students in her region will often want to have an input into determining the criteria for selection, for example, and will expect that the decisions she takes with regard to selection will be supported by the national office. It is particularly frustrating to volunteers when the effort and thought they have put into a decision is completely dismissed by the national office staff who may employ a different set of criteria.

A similar frustration is encountered by volunteers who feel thwarted in their abilities to carry out their tasks because of a lack of resources. This may include such things as a lack of administrative support, a lack of training and information, or quite simply a lack of funds. Volunteers who must spend money from their own pocket in order to fulfill their responsibilities to the organization may easily become less and less willing to volunteer. Reimbursement of expenses incurred in volunteer activities should be prompt and the procedures for requesting reimbursement should be simple to follow.

4. AFS should develop a flexible organizational style with plans to integrate new volunteers and allow for succession of leadership within the organization.
Most volunteers in Germany expressed a dislike for overly rigid structures and roles in a volunteer group. Constant renewal, resilient organizational structure, and lack of continuity seem to be characteristic of successful volunteer ventures, while repetitive routine, rigid structure, organizational stagnation, and lack of change are at the heart of most de-motivating factors. While volunteers prefer clearly defined tasks, the roles in the organization should be able to change as the membership changes. The energy and "life" in an organization is encouraged by keeping the circle of volunteers open

to newcomers. Meeting formats and program activities need to be developed to accommodate differences between "older" and "newer" volunteers and to allow for differences of opinion and perspective.

The constant turn-over of volunteers -- particularly among the youth who often leave town to attend university -- is often seen as problematic but can also be viewed as a continual source of new ideas. The enthusiasm of the new volunteers can be put to use by teaming them with experienced volunteers in an "apprenticeship" system that has proved highly successful in some areas.

5. AFS should make greater use of its volunteers' knowledge and expertise.
For many volunteers, sharing insights and information is an important motivating factor. Returnees in particular have a strong interest in passing on their insights to new program participants by working as orientation staff or liaison to international students and families. Host families, also, may enjoy passing on advice or giving information to the next group, while experienced volunteers may enjoy training newcomers (both volunteers and staff). Since the desire to teach or inform seems to be a strong motivation to volunteer, AFS should determine how this motivation can be put to full advantage. Asking volunteers to share their expertise is also an important form of volunteer recognition.

6. AFS should provide opportunities for new learning and experience in its volunteer organization.
Acquiring new information and skills is a strong motivation for many volunteers, especially among those who do not get such satisfaction in their jobs and among homemakers who are seeking responsibilities outside the home. AFS could take advantage of this motivation by training volunteers for jobs in areas such as counseling, organizing workshops and seminars, or coordinating special programs and events for exchange students. AFS volunteers are also likely to want to build on their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and to broaden their perspective by establishing new contacts around the world.

7. AFS should nurture its volunteers, providing recognition and support.
In some ways, this recommendation sums up the previous six. But it is worth re-stating that volunteers need to feel that their work is valuable and important to the organization. This does not mean giving out special awards or making speeches to honor specific volunteers or the volunteers in general. Many of those interviewed in this study were embarrassed or even suspicious of such recognition. It does mean noticing when volunteers do a job well, listening to their views (and taking them serious-

ly), giving them real responsibilities for which they are to be held accountable, and developing strong personal relationships with them. In addition, volunteers will frequently enjoy the direct recognition of their efforts that comes from seeing "their" AFS students grow and learn.

8. AFS should identify and integrate new target groups of volunteers.
Positive experiences in some local AFS committees as well as in other exchange organizations suggest three target groups of potential volunteers who have no prior affiliation with AFS and who are looking for some activity in the international or intercultural field. The first group are returnees from other exchange programs, which may lack a local committee structure or way for its returnees to become involved. The second are professionals with expertise and skills relevant to student exchange, especially from the fields of education and counseling. The third group of "junior" seniors (i.e., retirees looking for new directions, activities, and a way to apply their skills and interests) constitutes a growing potential for volunteering in general, especially in the cultural and educational sectors. Quite a few of them develop a strong interest in foreign cultures through travels and lectures and would welcome the opportunity to combine that interest with an involvement with the younger generation. AFS should reach out to these target groups through presentations and activity programs in the local committees, as well as through personal contacts of committee members. In particular, AFS should acquaint these volunteers with the aims and policies of the organization, and should attempt to enhance their sense of belonging by supplying them with specific tasks suitable to their interests, skills, and resources.